

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering that is assembled into a steering shaft for a vehicle and has a female shaft and a male shaft that are fitted to be able to transmit torque and to move relative to each other in an axial direction, the telescopic shaft for vehicle steering comprising:

torque transmitting portions that are respectively disposed on an outer surface of the male shaft and on an inner surface of the female shaft with a gap therebetween when no torque is applied, ~~and come in the torque~~ transmitting portions coming into contact with each other for transmitting so as to transmit torque upon rotation therebetween when a torque applied to one of the male and female shafts exceeds a predetermined value; and

a preload portion ~~composed of~~ including a rolling member that is disposed between the outer surface of the male shaft and the inner surface of the female shaft at a different position from a position where the torque transmitting portions are located and that rolls when the male shaft and

the female shaft ~~relatively move~~ relative to each other in the axial direction, and an elastic member that is disposed adjacent to the rolling member in the diametral direction and ~~gives pressure upon that~~ biases the male shaft and the female shaft through the rolling member, the preload portion transmitting torque between the male and female shafts when a torque is applied to one of the male and female shafts,

wherein ~~when a~~ a rotation angle A of the male shaft with respect to the female shaft corresponding to the gap in between the torque transmitting portions is converted into a rotation angle A and is less than a rotation angle B of the male shaft with respect to the female shaft corresponding to a maximum deflection capacity of the elastic member possible flexural amount of the elastic member in the preload portion is converted into a rotation angle B,

~~the rotation angle A is less than the rotation angle B upon transmitting no torque.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the rotation angle A ~~at the torque transmitting portions is set from 0.01 degrees~~ to 0.25 degrees.

3. (Currently Amended) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the torque transmitting portions ~~are composed of~~include a projection elongated in the axial direction and having a substantially arc sectional shape formed on the outer surface of the male shaft, and a groove elongated in the axial direction and having a substantially arc sectional shape formed on the inner surface of the female shaft.

4. (Currently Amended) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the torque transmitting portions ~~do not come~~are not in contact with each other ~~continuously in the axial direction upon transmitting no torque~~until a torque applied to one of the male and female shafts exceeds a predetermined value.

5. (Currently Amended) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the torque transmitting portions ~~are composed of~~include a spline-fitting structure or a serration-fitting structure formed on the outer surface of the male shaft and the inner surface of the female shaft.

6. (Original) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the preload portion has a first axial groove disposed on the outer surface of the male shaft and a second axial groove disposed on the inner surface of the female shaft opposite to the first axial groove, and the rolling member and the elastic member are disposed between the first axial groove and the second axial groove.

7. (Currently Amended) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein a plurality of preload portions are disposed between the male shaft and the female shaft, and the ~~plurality of~~torque transmitting portions are disposed between adjacent preload portions.

8. (Original) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 7, wherein the preload portions are disposed in the circumferential direction with an interval of 180 degrees having the torque transmitting portions in-between.

9. (Original) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 7, wherein the preload portions are disposed in the circumferential direction with an interval

of 120 degrees having the torque transmitting portions in-between.

10. (Original) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 9, wherein the torque transmitting portions are disposed at the center in the circumferential direction between the preload portions.

11. (Previously Presented) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the rolling member includes at least one spherical body.

12. (Currently Amended) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein the elastic member ~~is composed of~~includes a leaf spring.

13. (Original) The telescopic shaft for vehicle steering according to claim 1, wherein a solid lubricant film is formed on the outer surface of the male shaft or the inner surface of the female shaft.

14. (New) A telescopic shaft for vehicle steering comprising:

a female shaft and a male shaft that are fitted together so as to transmit torque therebetween and to move relative to each other in an axial direction;

torque transmitting portions respectively disposed on an outer surface of the male shaft and on an inner surface of the female shaft with a gap therebetween; and

a preload portion including a rolling member and an elastic member, the rolling member being disposed between the outer surface of the male shaft and the inner surface of the female shaft at a different position from a position where the torque transmitting portions are located and rolling when the male shaft and the female shaft move relative to each other in the axial direction, the elastic member being disposed adjacent to the rolling member and biasing the male shaft and the female shaft with the rolling member,

wherein the preload portion transmits torque between the male and female shafts when a torque applied to one of the male and female shafts is less than a predetermined value,

the torque transmitting portions come into contact with each other so as to transmit torque therebetween when a torque applied to one of the male and female shafts exceeds the predetermined value, and

the torque transmitting portions come into contact with each other prior to a maximum deflection capacity of the elastic member being reached.